

AmeriCorps*State Program Guidance Manual

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Introduction

A cornerstone of programs sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service is fostering an ethic of service in program participants. By instilling in service members a firsthand understanding of the benefits of being actively engaged in their communities, programs build the futures of their communities.

The AmeriCorps*State Program enables organizations (government, non-profits, and faith-based groups) to place into direct service individuals whose skills and interests mesh with documented community needs.

This manual provides basic guidance for organizations receiving AmeriCorps*State funds through the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service in the Virginia Department of Social Services (OVCS). It is not meant to be an “everything you need to know” document because many resources already exist on the OVCS website (www.vaservice.org), on the website of the Corporation for National and Community Service (www.nationalservice.gov), and through other resources. This manual does set forth key expectations and procedures, and gives AmeriCorps*State programs a starting point as they navigate successful program creation and implementation.

Section 1 – Precontract Requirements

A. Introduction

All subgrantees are required to submit for review and approval a number of items before receiving an AmeriCorps contract through the Virginia Department of Social Services. These precontract items are valuable in preparing a program to move quickly to successful implementation once a contract is issued, helping a program be conducted proactively and comprehensively, and supporting programmatic and fiscal compliance.

Precontract items must be submitted and approved by OVCS by the established deadline to ensure that OVCS has adequate time to review, comment, and receive revisions to material provided. These requirements are incorporated by reference into subgrantee contracts.

Note that some of the items require documentation executed by someone other than the Program Director. Generally, this individual has the responsibility and authority to obligate staff and financial resources to a project. Examples of the titles of this individual are: President; County Administrator; Executive Director; and Chairperson. Additionally, the subgrantee's Chief Financial Officer must at least review and initial the Financial System Survey (Module C).

B. Precontract Requirements

Grantee-Specific Issues: Issues related to individual applications may be identified during the review process that must be addressed in order for the project to receive funding. Examples of this might be a proposal that has a cost per MSY that exceeds the maximum allowable amount, or member service assignments that displace paid staff. These issues may have both programmatic and budgetary ramifications that must be addressed and corrected prior to contract execution. OVCS will contact the lead individual identified in the application to arrange a discussion of required modifications.

Performance Measures: Program Directors must review the Corporation's Performance Measurement Toolkit, and certify completion of this task. Programs must develop at least one set of aligned performance measures and enter them into their applications in eGrants. In addition, all programs are required to incorporate the state-wide performance measure related to volunteer recruitment and support developed by OVCS.

CNCS Program Start Up Guide: Program Director must carefully review this guide and be prepared to discuss it with their assigned OVCS program officer. Program Directors will certify that they have reviewed this guide.

Certification of Review of Tutorials and Protocols: This document must be executed by the Program Director and his or her supervisor, confirming that the Program Director has completed review of the My AmeriCorps Tutorials, the Virginia OnCorps Tutorials, and the OVCS Electronic Systems Protocol. **(See Appendix 1)**

Certification of Availability of Match Funds: Programs must document the availability of match funds. This is done via notarized certification of fund availability by an individual with the authority to obligate funds on behalf of the organization. **(See Appendix 1)**

Certification of Approval for Use of Federal Funds: Programs must document receipt of approval for the use of Federal funds as match on the AmeriCorps program budget. This is done via notarized certification that receipt of approval is in the form of a letter on Federal agency letterhead granting such approval, or identified in Federal regulation. **(See Appendix 1)**

Certification of Organization Authorization: This document must be executed by the organizational President, Executive Director, Chairperson, County Administrator, or other similar individual, and must be notarized. It identifies (1) the legal name and address of the organization (2) who in the organization has the authority to sign contracts, and (3) who in the organization has the authority to sign requests for reimbursement. **(See Appendix 1)**

*The remaining Precontract requirements are to be included in a Program Design. The Program Design will set forth all policies, guidelines, and procedures for implementation of each AmeriCorps*State Program. A template is included in **Appendix 1** of this document. The Program Design must be reviewed, approved, and signed by OVCS, and signed by the Chief Executive of the grantee. Items that must be included in the Program Design include:*

Position Descriptions: Programs must submit position descriptions that outline specific roles, tasks, and responsibilities for each AmeriCorps member. These must be reviewed and approved by OVCS prior to members beginning their service assignment. **(See Appendix 1)**

Draft Member Contracts: Each program must have a standard member contract that includes all information required by CNCS and OVCS. A sample member contract is available for programs to use for this purpose. **(See Appendix 1)**

Recruitment and Inclusion Plan: The purpose of this plan is to identify the subgrantee's intended outreach methods for conducting open and inclusive recruitment of AmeriCorps service members. Additionally, this plan will include information on how the program will include outreach to individuals with disabilities, and how individuals with disabilities will be accommodated as service members. This plan will include an assessment of accessibility. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

OVCS is working with the Partnership for People with Disabilities and the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services to ensure that subgrantees have the tools necessary to prepare and implement a sound Inclusion Plan.

Training Plan for Members and Staff: The Training Plan outlines the training schedule and key elements for providing training to both AmeriCorps members and program staff. There must be detailed training calendars for both members and staff as an appendix to the Program Design. Program Directors are asked to specifically identify the types of training that will be provided and curricula that will be used, who will provide the training, cost involved, and where the training will occur. Further, Program Directors must address support of members working towards receipt of a GED. Multi-site programs must address how members working in different locations will coalesce as one AmeriCorps team. Program directors are encouraged to contact one another to share training opportunities and participate jointly.

The Training Plan also outlines training provided for Program Directors, Site Supervisors, and others with responsibilities for working with service members. Staff training will include certain OVCS training, but should also take into account the training needs of specific

individuals. For instance, all site supervisors should receive AmeriCorps-specific training, but individuals who are new to supervision generally should receive supervisory training. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Media Plan: Each program will identify how and when it will engage with its community through use of media. This must include the traditional media, as well as social media opportunities. AmeriCorps must be clearly and prominently featured on organization and program printed and electronic materials. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Service Day Plan: This plan identifies appropriate service day activities identified by Program Directors. Programs will detail their plans for commemorating Day of Service and Remembrance (September 11), Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (the third Monday of each January), and for one other Corporation-sponsored Day of Service. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Non-Discrimination Policy Plan and Statement: Include a policy and plan to meet the AmeriCorps Provisions for State Administrative, Program Development and Training, and Disability Placement Grants, Section E.15 requirements, which includes notification to service recipients, applicants, program staff, and the public, including those with impaired vision or hearing, that it operates its program or its activity subject to the non-discrimination requirements of the applicable statutes. Sample language provided states:

It is against the law for organizations that receive federal financial assistance from the Corporation for National Service to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, age, political affiliation, or, in most programs, religion. It is also unlawful to retaliate against any person who, or organization that, files a complaint about such discrimination.

Grievance Procedures: Every program must have a grievance procedure that is specific to their AmeriCorps program and complies with CNCS requirements. Additionally, OVCS requires that Programs certify that they have had legal counsel review and approve their program grievance procedures. A tool with CNCS requirements is made available to programs to assist in development of their grievance procedures. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design, and Appendix 9, Grievance Procedure Checklist)**

Financial Review and System Survey (Module C): The Financial System Survey, to be completed or reviewed by the sub grantee's Chief Financial Officer, walks the preparer and reviewer through all aspects of financial practices. This survey will also connect internal procedures and timeframes with OVCS requirements. OVCS review of this survey prior to contract execution alerts both the subgrantee and OVCS to any obvious systemic issues that may affect the subgrantee's ability to implement the project in compliance with OMB circulars and with DSS requirements. Note that OVCS may request additional information, including but not limited to copies of annual audits, based on the content of the survey. This survey must include whether the subgrantee will provide information about staff time through use of timesheets or with a cost allocation plan. If the subgrantee chooses to submit a cost allocation plan, it must be accepted by OVCS prior to the subgrantee's receipt of its AmeriCorps contract. As part of the Program Design, the subgrantee will be required to detail the process and individuals involved in preparing, approving, submitting for approval, and submitting for payment all reimbursements. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Program Management: This section will detail the processes for ensuring proper communication, oversight, and reporting throughout the contracted program period. Examples include: the process for review and approval of member and staff timesheets; methods of communication between Program Directors, Site Supervisors, Financial Directors, Executive Directors, Board Members, and other stakeholders; reporting in OnCorps and e-Grants; and detailed partnership agreements. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Program Management Plan: This document is an appendix to the Program Design. It includes a detailed timeline of all program activities with associated responsibility charting and expected completion dates. This plan will become an official contract document, and must be revised to document any deadlines that cannot be met during the course of the program.

Program Evaluation: A description of the process that will be used in gathering data for use in a Program Evaluation, including data on civil rights compliance, demographics, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities. This will include: the purpose for the evaluation; how the evaluation results will be used; the methods to be used in gathering data; and the approach to be used for creating the evaluation criteria. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design, and Appendix 7, Program Evaluation)**

Health Insurance: Health care coverage must be made available to all full-time members. Because this coverage must be made available to members effective their first day of service, arrangements for this coverage must be secured ahead of time. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

AmeriCorps-Specific Program Manual/Handbook: Each program must develop policies and procedures specifically related to their AmeriCorps program. The organization's policy manual will not satisfy this requirement... Note that within what is permissible and required by regulation, there are certain areas of flexibility with strategic ramifications. A tool with all policy requirements is made available to programs to assist in development of their policy manual. **(See Appendix 1, Program Design)**

Section 2 – Program Management and Monitoring

A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) ensures individual program compliance with programmatic and fiscal requirements through monitoring. As the prime recipient of CNCS funds, OVCS is obligated to oversee both the appropriate use of public resources and successful achievement of the outcomes for which investment of public funds is made. Monitoring may occur via phone, video- or teleconference, email, letter, and on-site visits.

B. Authorization

Compliance guidelines are set forth by the following:

1. National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (42 USC 12501, et seq) – Chapter 129
2. National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
3. Corporation Regulations (45 CFR Parts 2500-2599, 2510 et seq, Parts 2541-2543)
4. Virginia AmeriCorps Request for Proposal (RFP)
5. VDSS Program Contract/Grant Award
6. AmeriCorps Provisions (**See Appendix 2**)
7. Applicable OMB Circulars
8. A-133
9. Other relevant legislation, regulations, and requirements as amended or incorporated by state or federal government.

C. Goals

- To assess and ensure programs' ability to perform effectively;
- To identify potential problems and eliminate them or reduce their effects;
- To support programs' increased capacity and sustainability.

D. Monitoring (See Appendix 4, Monitoring Modules)

Program Monitoring is conducted throughout the funded year to review and evaluate records, accomplishments, organizational procedures, fiscal control systems, and service impact, including an early desk audit to confirm timely enrollment and appropriate background check and accompaniment documentation.

To accomplish this objective, the OVCS has adopted a *Risk-Based Strategy* for monitoring its programs. The purpose of this process is to have in place the tools that will enable the office to evaluate its programs. In addition, assignment of risk provides program staff will an important factor for scheduling initial and follow up monitoring visits as necessary.

To determine and assign risk, programs are periodically evaluated individually based upon several program and fiscal related risk indicators, that may include but are not limited to;

- Program Reporting
- Program Communication
- Results of Prior Monitoring or Other Site Visits
- The Number of Additional Programs Managed by AmeriCorps Program Staff
- Number of AmeriCorps Service Sites
- Number of Staff Devoted to AmeriCorps Program

- Management Support and Oversight
- Board Involvement and Oversight
- Program Experience with State and/or Federal Government Contracts
- Adequacy of Computer Systems
- Ability to consistently meet Performance Measures
- Current Operating Environment
- Federal Funds Expended During a Fiscal Year (amount)
- Internal Controls
- Results of Prior Audit(s)
- Impact of Budget Changes on Overall Finances
- Reporting Timeliness
- Changes in the Audit Unit (and impact upon overall program)

Note: new programs, and programs with previous findings, are automatically considered higher risk, and are therefore subject to additional monitoring by OVCS staff.

The OVCS's *Monitoring Strategy* encompasses a variety of mechanisms to provide oversight of subgrantees, which may include the following:

- *Communicating*, maintaining regular communications, such as scheduled conference calls or advisory or policy issuances, etc.
- *Training*, to assure program staff knowledge.
- *Reporting*, receiving, and reviewing Program and Fiscal Reports, A-133 or other audits, and other reports as necessary.
- *Site Visits*, for review of compliance and/or program quality and performance issues or emergency resolution of identified problems. Site visits could also include specialized technical assistance trips or special audits or surveys.
- *Evaluating*, to assess progress toward program goals and the severity of any standards not met.

The above considerations are used along with a risk assessment of each grantee based on the following types of factors:

New Grantees

- Organizational performance in past endeavors
- Prior federal or state awards and programs
- Results of prior independent A-133s

Continuing Grantees

- History of organizational performance
- Prior monitoring visits and findings
- Compliance issues
- Adequacy of reports—program and financial
- Timeliness of reports
- Program performance (quality of activities and accomplishments, responsiveness)
- Audit findings (A-133 or state reviews)
- Adequacy and stability of management, both of the organization and the program
- Community feedback

Information from the following sources may also be used in assessing risk:

- Monitoring visit reports
- Progress Reports and Aggregate Financial Reports
- Invoices
- Documentation of program expense reports, time logs, enrollments, etc.
- Status of corrective actions taken for past deficiencies
- Community feedback

Program Monitoring involves the use and analysis of information gathered both informally and formally using several program review instruments (Modules), using an electronic reporting system as described below, and through conversation.

Program Monitoring targets the following areas through the review and/or collection of the following information, including but not limited to:

1. Reporting Compliance – Timely and accurate submission of:
 - a. Member Enrollment Forms
 - b. Change of Status Forms
 - c. Progress Reports
 - d. Periodic Expenditure Reports (PER)
 - e. Federal Financial Reports (AFR)
 - f. A-133 Audit Reports
2. Program Specific Policy Manual – Information about the required content of this manual can be found in Module A.
3. Member Documentation – A review of member files is conducted during site visits. All member files are reviewed, for adequacy and accuracy of information. Information about the required documentation can be found in Module B2.
4. Review of Timesheets – A review of member timesheets is conducted as part of program monitoring. Timesheets are reviewed using Virginia OnCorps, the official timekeeping system of record. Note that OVCS strongly discourages subgrantees from using any other type of timekeeping system. If a program chooses to keep paper timesheets in addition to timesheets in OnCorps, someone must have responsibility for reconciling paper and OnCorps timesheets on a weekly or biweekly basis. Timesheets are reviewed for the following:
 - a. Authorized by member, site supervisor, **and** program director
 - b. Notation of actual time and date (i.e. 8/30/00; 8:00am-12:30pm)
 - c. Notation of hours (i.e. 4.5 hours)
 - d. Notation of activity (direct service hours, training hours, fundraising hours)
 - e. Inclusion of appropriate breaks
 - f. Timeliness of information, and status of ‘pending’ hours
 - g. Likelihood that members will complete their terms of service within the time remaining; and
 - h. Clear documentation of appropriate accompaniment, including the name(s) of the individual(s) providing the accompaniment.

5. Benefits and Coverage – Documentation of the following benefits and/or coverage:
 - a. Liability insurance that covers the organization, employees and members
 - b. FICA coverage for members
 - c. Health care coverage for eligible members

6. Organizational Strength – Demonstration of:
 - a. Evaluation tools
 - b. Agency mission
 - c. Staff capacity and quality

Monitoring (Site) Visit Protocol – when it is determined that a site visit is warranted, the procedure will be as follows:

- Program Officer schedules date for site visit via email or phone at least 30 days in advance of visit
- Confirmation letter sent via email or hard copy with a copy of agenda for visit and copy of review instrument tool(s)
- Site Visit conducted
- Follow-up letter & a monitoring report sent within 30 days of visit with a copy of completed review instruments
- Required actions will be communicated as needed
- Follow-up visit, if warranted

Initial Program Year Desk Audit

Every program will be required to submit information within thirty days of initial member enrollment. Programs must supply a certification of completion of enrollment of members within 30 days of initiation of enrollment, and a certification of the completion/status of all criminal history checks and accompaniment procedures. Additional information may be requested as a part of this initial desk audit, including financial documentation. A review of timesheets for that period will also be conducted. OVCS will send each program an e-mail request for audit information at least 20 days before the information is due, and will conclude the audit with a phone call prior to providing the program with a formal monitoring assessment.

Quarterly Program Desk Audits

For each quarter of the program year, OVCS Program Officers may conduct a desk audit to document current status of member progress towards member completion of service hours, program retention status, reporting content and timeliness, and additional programmatic and fiscal oversight items identified during monthly program calls, site visits, technical assistance sessions, and other communications.

Additional Monitoring – Other methods are used by the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service to monitor the progress of subgrantees and to assess program compliance. The following is a partial list of those methods and tools:

- Monthly Progress Reports
- Monthly Periodic Expenditure Reports
- Monthly In-Kind Contribution Forms

- Federal Financial Reports (AFR)
- Desk Monitoring
- Program Training and Development Teleconferences
- Program Director Teleconferences
- Program Director Meetings

E. Reporting (See Appendix 3, Electronic Systems Protocol, and Appendix 5, Reporting Requirements and Schedule)

1. Virginia OnCorps

Virginia OnCorps is an electronic program reporting and managements system utilized by Virginia AmeriCorps programs and the OVCS.

2. Monthly Progress Reports

Programs are required to submit monthly progress reports detailing progress toward performance measures, program activities, and steps toward sustainability. Monthly Progress Reports are due **no later than** the 6th working day of each month and are submitted using the Virginia OnCorps reporting system. Reports are reviewed by OVCS Program Officers, who may provide feedback as necessary for clarification or requesting additional information. Based on the report, programs may be required to provide written correspondence, participate in specific training, and/or receive additional site visits.

3. Quarterly Program Reports

Programs are required to submit the following reports via Virginia OnCorps for each quarter of the program year:

- a. Quarterly Performance Measures Progress
- b. Program Progress/CNCS Initiatives
- c. Demographics
- d. Service and Volunteer Report
- e. Great Stories
- f. Volunteer Mobilization

4. Fiscal Reporting

Please review Section 4 – Fiscal Management and Monitoring.

5. Program Evaluation

Programs must submit an evaluation annually, as well as a comprehensive evaluation at the completion of a three-year grant cycle. The evaluation can be completed internally or externally for all subgrantees with an average annual Corporation program grant of \$500,000 or less. Any programs with an average annual program grant exceeding \$500,000 are required to complete an external evaluation.

F. Summary

Every effort is made to ensure the successful completion of the funded program period. In addition to the above reports and procedures, OVCS may collect and review additional information (e.g., service hour timesheets, self-reporting fiscal assessments, audit reports, etc.). Additional reports, visits, teleconferences, correspondence, and training may be required based upon program performance and compliance.

Section 3 – Fiscal Management and Monitoring

A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) must not only exercise standard accounting procedures in the use and management of monetary funds within the Unit, but also ensure the proper management and allowable costs of its subgrantees.

Practices have been established to determine the following:

- accurate financial information and reporting;
- match requirements including cash and ‘in-kind’ services;
- internal controls;
- documentation to support expenditures;
- documentation of staff and member activity; and
- effective cash management and budgetary controls.

(See Appendix 6)

B. Review of A-133 Audits

Programs are required to annually submit the most recent audit of the organization to OCVS. The reports are reviewed to ensure that the legal applicant is in compliance with financial regulations. The A-133 may alert OVCS to deficiencies in internal controls, noncompliance with grant provisions, and questioned costs. A copy of the audit report is filed in each program file.

Most state agencies (e.g., universities) have an audit completed by the Auditor of Public Accounts. This comprehensive audit makes it very difficult to extract AmeriCorps dollars from the reporting. However, these reports are reviewed by the State and any findings are duly noted and shared within State agencies.

When audit findings raise concerns about the legal management and reporting of finances, programs must provide OVCS a written account of the corrective steps taken. OVCS determines if these actions are adequate and effective. OVCS may also request Management Letters from the firm that conducted the audit. If necessary, OVCS will use the additional expertise of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Accounting Department to identify weaknesses in program internal controls. Lack of continuous improvement or serious audit findings may result in an early closure/termination of the program based on the required terms and conditions of the sub grantee award agreement (or the contract under the RFP).

C. Financial Reports, Documents and Procedures

All subgrantees must submit a variety of financial documents to be compliant with program requirements.

Periodic Expenditure Reports - PERs

Programs submit monthly Periodic Expenditure Reports (PERs) to generate program reimbursements and to provide a benchmark of expenditures, allowable costs and program activity. The PER is completed in Virginia OnCorps.

Programs are provided written feedback on PERs. Based on the PER review, programs may be required to provide written explanations, copies of source documentation, participate in specific training and/or receive additional site visits.

1. Monthly PERs are due to OVCS **no later than** the 8th workday of each month. Late submission is an incident of noncompliance.
2. PER Submission and Review Process:
 - a. Program enters a PER into Virginia OnCorps as “complete - awaiting approval.”
 - b. After review, the Fiscal Officer will either approve the report, or notify the Program Director that specific revisions are required, along with a due date.
 - c. This review and revision process will continue until the report is approved by the Fiscal Officer.

Aggregate Financial Reports (AFR)

Programs submit quarterly Aggregate Financial Reports (AFRs) (formerly ‘Federal Financial Reports’ or ‘FFR’) to provide a summary of the financial status of the subgrantee. This report is completed in Virginia OnCorps.

1. AFRs are due to OVCS **no later than two working days after the December, March, June, and September PERs are approved by OVCS.** It is common for a 12 month contract to submit five (5) quarterly reports. Late submission is an incident of noncompliance.
2. AFR Submission and Review Process:
 - a. Program enters the AFR into Virginia OnCorps as “complete - awaiting approval.”
 - b. The Fiscal Officer reviews the AFR.
 - c. After review, the Fiscal Officer will either approve the report, or notify the Program Director that specific revisions are required, along with a due date.
 - d. This review and revision process will continue until the report is approved by the Fiscal Officer.
 - e. Programs should have e-mail notifications set up in OnCorps to track approvals of PERs, budgets modifications and AFRs.

For both the PER and the AFR, review emphasis is placed upon the following areas:

1. Correct grant number;
2. Proper name of program used;
3. Proper reporting period, whether monthly or quarterly;
4. Numerical figures/lines are calculated correctly;
5. Documentation that the sub grantee meets minimum, contracted match requirements;
6. Reasonable expenditure rates, by line item, given the point in the program year;
7. Reasonable expenditures given the program activities; and
8. Any other related items and issues identified by OVCS.

Monthly In-kind Contribution Reports

In-kind Contribution Reports may be requested upon review of a subgrantee PER. This report is used to document in-kind match as specified in the proposal and/or in-kind services and/or monetary support provided by the grantee. In-kind Contribution Reports are submitted via Virginia OnCorps. Programs shall maintain supporting documentation of in-kind contributions on site to include in-kind contribution forms.

D. Budget Revisions

Throughout the program year, a program may request line-item budget reallocations using the following process:

1. Program submits a Budget Modification Request via Virginia OnCorps.
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2. OVCS fiscal officer will review and approve the request, providing notification via Virginia OnCorps –or– request additional information and revisions as necessary.
3. If additional information or revisions are required, step #3 will be repeated until the request is approved.
4. CNCS approval may be needed for budget revisions that represent more than ten percent (10%) of CNCS funds in the budget.

E. Match Requirements

Programs must meet the match requirements as identified in the RFP and CNCS guidelines. If a Program submits an application with a match amount that exceeds the requirement, the amount and percentage of match shown in the application become the match requirement. All match included in the grant that relates to personnel must be documented with detailed timesheets. The method for documenting match must correspond to the relative OMB circular that governs the organization.

Any match from in-kind donations must be supported by a record of valuation, and a signed statement of confirmation from the donor.

F. Program Income

Program income is defined as “gross income received by the grantee.....directly generated by a grant supported activity, or earned only as the result of the grant agreement during the grant period” [CFR §2541.250(b) and §2543.249(a)]. Program income includes fees from services performed under the grant, and income from sale of commodities or items fabricated under a grant agreement. Revenue received from sources to support the program generally, and that doesn’t directly result from grant activities, is not program income.

(a) CNCS as a Federal awarding agency shall apply the standards set forth in the OMB Circulars in requiring recipient and sub grantee organizations to account for program income related to projects financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.

(b) Program income earned during the project period shall be retained by the recipient and, in accordance with Federal awarding agency regulations or the terms and conditions of the award shall be used in one or more of the ways listed in the following:

(1) Used to finance ‘match’ or “cost share” (the non-Federal share of the project or program).

(2) Added to funds committed to the project by the Federal awarding agency and recipient and used to further eligible project or program objectives.

(3) Deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the Federal share of costs is based.

The three ways above specify how program income can be used. For most sub grantees, use as match is preferred, and is specified in the grant provisions or terms and conditions.

Program income that is used to meet cost-sharing (match) requirements is reported as the “Recipient Share of Outlays” on the OVCS quarterly Aggregate Financial Report AFR. For

CNCS, the OVCS AFR is the CNCS Federal Financial Report. Excess program income, over and above the required match or cost share, if any, is reported in section 10 of the AFR.

In limited situations, subgrantees may be instructed to use the funds to enhance or expand grant-approved activities using method (2). In other situations, subgrantees may be required to use the program income to replace approved Federal grant funds, using method (3).

For further information on this subject, please consult www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.

Section 4 – Communication

A. Introduction

All significant correspondence between AmeriCorps program directors and Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) program and/or fiscal officers should be documented in the appropriate program file. OVCS program and fiscal officers are given the responsibility to determine what constitutes significant correspondence.

B. Significant Correspondence

Below is a partial list of items that may constitute significant correspondence between program directors and OVCS staff:

- Any changes to member slot types, including but not limited to, slot corrections, change of slot type, etc.
- All programmatic changes to include program policies and procedures;
- All programmatic changes pertaining to AmeriCorps program service activities;
- All programmatic changes or questions pertaining to AmeriCorps mandatory or special events;
- All budget modifications and financial changes in the approved contracts;
- Any change in organizational capacity (e.g., financial status, legal restraint, etc.)
- Any information regarding AmeriCorps Living Allowances;
- All accounting issues including fraud and program waste;
- All changes that reflect a variance in program objectives;
- All compelling circumstances with supporting documentation;
- All issues or questions pertaining to replacing AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members returning to the program;
- All issues or questions pertaining to an AmeriCorps member transferring to another program;
- All issues or questions pertaining to AmeriCorps member suspensions, prohibited activities, and rules of conduct;
- All issues pertaining to law suits, grievances, and injuries of any kind;
- All organizational changes such as personnel being hired or resigning from the program. This includes any changes in the management structure of the program;
- All issues pertaining to criminal history checks and/or reference checks/ASPs;
- All requests for program no-cost extensions;
- All issues that pertain to fundraising risks;
- All issues that involve AmeriCorps members' injuries while serving in the program;
- All AmeriCorps program issues (i.e., Sexual Harassment, Racial Harassment, General Harassment, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues, Insurance issues, Workers compensation issues, AmeriCorps Disciplinary action issues, and Grievance procedures);
- All program complaints or concerns pertaining to Office on Volunteerism and Community Service staff;
- All program appeals of non-compliance notifications;
- All program training requests for staff and AmeriCorps members;
- All requests for extensions for program reports
- All program evaluation issues;
- All monitoring visit responses and requests for additional information;
- All general program requests and changes in any part of the approved contract.

C. Lines of Communication

OVCS's primary customer is always the Program Director, who is seen as the program 'gatekeeper'. Within OVCS, the assigned Program Officer is the 'gatekeeper'. OVCS may also communicate directly with an organizational fiscal manager, and in certain cases, the chief executive. It is the responsibility of the organization to ensure that its internal lines of communication are adequate.

The Program Director's primary customer is the AmeriCorps member. AmeriCorps members should not be directed to OVCS unless the office is clearly identified as a step in the program's internal grievance procedures. The program is responsible for relaying information and support to the member.

D. Routine Programmatic or Budgetary Changes

When OVCS receives a request for programmatic or budgetary changes, the office acknowledges the receipt within 5 working days.

OVCS reviews the request and notifies the program if additional information is required for review of the request. Upon receipt of required information or documentation, a final determination is made within ten (10) working days, and the program is notified of the outcome.

E. Program Appeals Process

The Appeals Process of OVCS is for use when OVCS AmeriCorps program staff makes a decision that is disputed by an AmeriCorps*State program subgrantee. Disputed decisions may include, but are not limited to, decisions regarding program extensions, denial of funds, requests made to return funding, or the discontinuation of a program.

Please note that decisions related to grants awarded under the OVCS AmeriCorps Program are exempt from the Virginia Administrative Process Act pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-4002(B)(4).

If the subgrantee has substantive objections to a decision of OVCS, the subgrantee may request a reconsideration of the disputed decision. Following are the required steps in the Appeals Process.

- A formal, written request for reconsideration must be made to the Director, Office on Volunteerism and Community Service, Virginia Department of Social Services, 801 E. Main Street, 15th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219 within 21 calendar days of the subgrantee receiving the disputed decision.
- When a request for reconsideration is made, the OVCS Director or the Director's designee shall hear such additional information, as may be deemed appropriate and pertinent to the matter involved, in an informal meeting within 21 calendar days of receipt of the subgrantee's request.
- Only one subgrantee representative may present the additional information. However, the subgrantee is allowed to have two other representatives present at the time of the meeting.
- At his/her discretion, the OVCS Director or the Director's designee may invite discussion or comments from others knowledgeable in the matter being appealed.
- The OVCS Director shall send to the subgrantee, and others deemed appropriate, a written

determination pursuant to the request for reconsideration within 21 calendar days of the informal meeting.

- Such determination by the OVCS Director shall be final.

Section 5 – Member Compliance and Protocol

A. Member Recruitment

As a precontract activity, programs are required to develop a Recruitment Plan. This plan has two primary functions. First, it demonstrates to OVCS that the program is prepared to implement a comprehensive recruitment process that maximizes the likelihood that the program will fill its member slots with individuals who are excited about the opportunities of community service.

Second, it outlines the intent to ensure that recruitment of service members will comply with all equal opportunity requirements, including full programmatic accessibility. OVCS is working with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Partnership for Persons with Disabilities to assist programs with both self-assessment and creation of accommodations as needed. (See Appendix 8)

B. Members Serving In Adjacent States

The Corporation for National and Community Service has determined that the question of whether an AmeriCorps member may conduct service activities in a state adjacent to the one in which the program normally operates must be decided by each state (AmeriCorps Policy FAQ Number 060215). OVCS has determined that members may not serve outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia, with the exception of disaster relief efforts, which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Requests for an exception must be submitted and approved by the appropriate OVCS Program Officer prior to members conducting out-of-state service activities.

C. Limitations on Value of Segal Education Awards Received

The Serve America Act amended the national service laws to no longer limit the receipt of education awards based upon the number of terms served, but rather place the limit on the aggregate value of education awards received. Section 146(c) now states: “An individual may not receive, through national service educational awards and silver scholar educational awards, more than an amount equal to the aggregate value of [two] such awards for full-time service.”

The amended law allows for an individual to earn more than two education awards, so long as the aggregate value of all awards received does not exceed the aggregate value of two full-time national service education awards. Significantly, the law does not create an entitlement to receive the aggregate value of two full-time awards; rather, it prohibits an individual from receiving *more* than the aggregate value of two full-time awards.

Programs should carefully review the applicable sections of the Serve America Act and the Final Rule implementing the Act in order to properly advise their AmeriCorps members.

D. Member Concern Protocol

When a member contacts OVCS to voice concerns or inquire about proper procedures, National Trust information, or other issues, the office responds within two working days. A written record of all correspondence with members will be placed in the appropriate program file.

OVCS will hear the concern of the member and provide guidance when possible. However, if it is a program complaint or grievance the member is directed to follow his/her program grievance procedure.

All programs are required to have a program-specific grievance procedure that meets the following minimum standards established by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

1. Grievance Procedures Minimum Standards (CFR § 2540.230)* (See Appendix 9)

State and local applicants that receive assistance from the Corporation must establish and maintain a procedure for the filing and adjudication of grievances from participants, labor organizations, and other interested individuals concerning programs that receive assistance from the Corporation. A grievance procedure may include dispute resolution programs such as mediation, facilitation, assisted negotiation and neutral evaluation. If the grievance alleges fraud or criminal activity, it must immediately be brought to the attention of the Corporation's inspector general. The items below, identified as a – h, are not a sample grievance procedure. They represent the minimum elements and thresholds that must be represented in a grievance procedure in order to minimally meet the Corporation's requirements.

- a. *Alternative dispute resolution.* (1) The aggrieved party may seek resolution through alternative means of dispute resolution such as mediation or facilitation. Dispute resolution proceedings must be initiated within 45 calendar days from the date of the alleged occurrence. (2) If mediation, facilitation, or other dispute resolution processes are selected, the process must be aided by a neutral party who, with respect to an issue in controversy, functions specifically to aid the parties in resolving the matter through a mutually achieved and acceptable written agreement. The neutral party may not compel a resolution.
- b. *Grievance procedure for unresolved complaints.* If the matter is not resolved within 30 calendar days from the date the informal dispute resolution process began, the neutral party must again inform the aggrieving party of his or her right to file a formal grievance.
- c. *Time limitations.* Except for a grievance that alleges fraud or criminal activity, a grievance must be made no later than one year after the date of the alleged occurrence. If a hearing is held on a grievance, it must be conducted no later than 30 calendar days after the filing of such grievance. A decision on any such grievance must be made no later than 60 calendar days after the filing of the grievance.
- d. *Arbitration* —(1) *Arbitrator* —(i) *Joint selection by parties.* If there is an adverse decision against the party who filed the grievance, or 60 calendar days after the filing of a grievance no decision has been reached, the filing party may submit the grievance to binding arbitration before a qualified arbitrator who is jointly selected and independent of the interested parties. (ii) *Appointment by Corporation.* If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator within 15 calendar days after receiving a request from one of the grievance parties, the Corporations Chief Executive Officer will appoint an arbitrator from a list of qualified arbitrators. (2) *Time Limits* —(i) *Proceedings.* An arbitration proceeding must be held no later than 45 calendar days after the request for arbitration, or, if the arbitrator is appointed by the Chief Executive Officer, the proceeding must occur no later than 30 calendar days after the arbitrator's appointment. (ii) *Decision.* A decision must be made by the arbitrator no later than 30 calendar days after the date the arbitration proceeding begins. (3) *The cost.* The cost of the arbitration proceeding must be divided evenly between the parties to the arbitration. If, however, a participant, labor organization, or other interested individual prevails under a binding arbitration proceeding, the State or local applicant that is a party to the grievance must pay the total cost of the proceeding and the attorney's fees of the prevailing party.
- e. *Suspension of placement.* If a grievance is filed regarding a proposed placement of a participant in a program that receives assistance under this chapter, such placement must not be made unless the placement is consistent with the resolution of the grievance.

f. *Remedies.* Remedies for a grievance filed under a procedure established by a recipient of Corporation assistance may include — (1) Prohibition of a placement of a participant; and (2) In grievance cases where there is a violation of nonduplication or nondisplacement requirements and the employer of the displaced employee is the recipient of Corporation assistance — (i) Reinstatement of the employee to the position he or she held prior to the displacement; (ii) Payment of lost wages and benefits; (iii) Re-establishment of other relevant terms, conditions and privileges of employment; and (iv) Any other equitable relief that is necessary to correct any violation of the nonduplication or nondisplacement requirements or to make the displaced employee whole.

g. *Suspension or termination of assistance.* The Corporation may suspend or terminate payments for assistance under this chapter.

h. *Effect of noncompliance with arbitration.* A suit to enforce arbitration awards may be brought in any Federal district court having jurisdiction over the parties without regard to the amount in controversy

Full text is available under CFR § 2540.230. Subgrantees must certify review and approval of their grievance procedures by legal counsel.

E. Alternative or Supplemental Member Service Activities

At times AmeriCorps members are faced with the challenge of accumulating adequate service hours to satisfy the requirements set forth in their service contract. Program Directors should be aware of these challenges through regular review of member service hours in Virginia OnCorps, member evaluations, and other program management practices. When a legitimate need arises for a member to seek alternative or supplemental service activities because adequate hours are not available through the member's normal service assignment, the member must work with the Program Director to identify acceptable and allowable service activities.

When considering a member's request for approval of alternative or supplemental service activities, there are several fundamental questions a Program Director should consider:

- Is the service/volunteer opportunity in the same general category as the program's basic or primary service design? In other words, is the opportunity basically similar to what the AmeriCorps program does or is it completely different?
- Was the service/volunteer opportunity discussed and planned at the outset of the member's term of service or did it arise as an afterthought? This gets at the issue of whether the opportunity was part of a member's overall service plan, or did it come about for other reasons.
 - Alternative and Supplemental Activities should be proposed to OVCS during the pre-contract period as part of the Program Design, and must be approved before the activities are scheduled.
- Is the service/volunteer opportunity a one-time project or an ongoing volunteer effort?
- How will the outcome of the alternative service be tracked for reporting purposes? Does it 'fit' approved performance measures?

The underlying framework for these questions is that though it is very commendable for an individual to do volunteer work, it is not the purpose of AmeriCorps to underwrite individuals' personal volunteer opportunities. It must be re-enforced that because AmeriCorps is a Federally-funded program, we must insure that the activities AmeriCorps members are engaged in represent what has been approved through the formal grant process. Additional and alternative service opportunities must be approved very judiciously.

Program Service Projects: It is an entirely different issue to plan and arrange coordinated service/volunteer activities for members as a strategic means to insure they accumulate adequate service hours. This type of planned, strategic effort is not only acceptable, but required as good program management. This type of effort would take place either at the beginning of the program year, or as part of a concentrated effort for many or all members toward the end of a program year. This differs significantly in that it does not accommodate one individual's personal volunteer aspirations or opportunities.

Program Directors are encouraged to seek guidance from OVCS in making final determinations concerning requests for alternative or supplemental service activities.

**F. Member Disciplinary Action at Office on Volunteerism and Community Service
Sponsored Events**

OVCS sponsors a number of events throughout the program year. All AmeriCorps members are expected to behave professionally while attending these events. If inappropriate behavior is demonstrated, the office will alert the appropriate program director, who is required to follow the program's disciplinary procedures. If illegal activity or violent behavior is identified, the member should be immediately terminated from the program and removed from the event grounds/premises.

G. National Trust Inquiries

For all questions concerning the Segal Education Award, members should be directed to the My AmeriCorps Web site at <https://my.AmeriCorps.gov/mp/login.do>.

H. National Service Program Criminal History Checks

The Corporation for National and Community Service requires all AmeriCorps programs to conduct a three-part National Service Criminal History Check on all AmeriCorps members and applicable program staff. 'Applicable program staff' includes all individuals who supervise AmeriCorps members, and/or who are represented in the program budget. A National Service Criminal History Check consists of: (1) National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) check, which identifies individuals required by their States to register as sex offenders; (2) State criminal history check, which involves a search of State law enforcement and court records (by name and/or fingerprint) to determine whether an applicant has a criminal history; and (3) FBI National Fingerprint Check. In addition, OVCS requires all subgrantees to complete Child Protective Services (CPS) checks on **all** members and applicable program staff.

Collectively, this is referred to as the 'four-part background check.' Appendix 10 to this document includes the "OVCS Four-Part Background Check Process", and details the requirements for adequate completion of staff and member background checks. A background check is not complete unless it includes clearance on all four part of the process.

OVCS must have access to the original documentation of these checks, regardless of confidentiality concerns. This applies to members and applicable program staff, regardless of whether applicable program staff is employed directly by the subgrantee or by a partner of the subgrantee.

Note that the NSOPR check must occur **PRIOR** to enrollment in the program. *Expenses associated with a member or a staff person is ineligible until this check is completed and*

documented. A strongly recommended ‘best practice’ is to complete this free, simple check at the time an application is received. Because the NSOPR check deals exclusively with public records, no release by the individual is necessary. A copy of the completed check that includes the actual date it was conducted must be printed and included in every member and staff file. Also, any required actions to address information that is returned as part of the check (i.e., the name entered returns information on individuals with the same or similar name) **MUST** be documented in the file.

The remaining elements of the background check (State criminal history check, FBI National Fingerprint Check, and the CPS check must be begun immediately upon acceptance of a member into a program or identification of an individual as applicable program staff. All elements of the check should be completed within 30 days of member enrollment or member supervision.

OVCS recognizes that requesting information from other sources is part of the National Service Criminal History Check process. As such, there may be a ‘lag time’ while a program waits for documentation. During this lag time, members and applicable program staff must be accompanied by a staff member who has gone through the organization’s standard background review.

Programs are prohibited from recruiting as members anyone who has a first-degree murder conviction or a conviction of any crime that requires inclusion on the National Sex Offender Public Registry. Programs must have a written protocol for determining suitability of applicants if other items are revealed as part of the Criminal History Check.

Some AmeriCorps programs are housed in or are partners with organizations or institutions in which background checks are routinely performed. In some instances, these checks may seem to be equivalent to all or part of the four-part background check. If an AmeriCorps program wishes to propose use of an existing or alternate process, please notify your program officer promptly. OVCS will consider review of a reasonable and *timely* “Alternative Search Protocol” (ASP). Ultimately, the ASP must be approved by the Corporation.

Programs must conduct the four-part background check on all new members, and any returning members with a break in service of more than 120 days. Returning members that do not have a break in service of more than 120 days are not required to undergo the complete four-part check. However, a National Sex Offender Public Registry check must be conducted for each term of service and language must be incorporated into member contracts to stipulate that members must report all criminal proceedings originating during their service term. See Appendix 10. Programs must conduct the four-part background check on all applicable program staff. Once the initial, timely check is conducted, and in consideration of the impact of this requirement on program budgets, OVCS follows CNCS regulation that the checks are not required again for these positions, unless there is a break in employment of greater than 120 days. If there is a break in employment greater than 120 days, the entire 4 part background check must be performed again.

Note that in addition to the requirement that NSOPR checks occur prior to enrollment, failure to comply with the balance of federal and state requirements related to background checks will jeopardize reimbursement.

In situations in which programs have volunteers providing direct services, it is strongly recommended that programs routinely conduct background checks on volunteers.

Additional guidance documents detailing the requirements and processes for all criminal background checks are available for Virginia AmeriCorps programs at www.vaservice.org, and all grantees should utilize **Appendix 10** of this document to comply with OVCS requirements.

I. Worker’s Compensation

In Virginia, AmeriCorps members are not considered employees and therefore are not eligible for unemployment. However, special legislation was passed in 2004 in order to provide Worker’s Compensation for AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members are deemed to be employees of the Commonwealth of Virginia for purposes of the Workers’ Compensation Act. The Act states that AmeriCorps members shall be eligible for medical costs from covered injuries but shall not be eligible for weekly compensation. Unlike workers compensation coverage, there is no coverage for unemployment for members as they are not employees and do not receive wages. They are service members who receive stipends in return for volunteering in local, state, and non-profit agencies in the Commonwealth. Specific reference can be found in *Code of Virginia* Title 65.2.

Please refer to **Appendix 11** for guidance documents and resources relevant to Worker’s Compensation.

J. Release From Service

Grantees may release members from participation for two reasons: (a) for compelling personal circumstances; and (b) for cause.

Compelling Personal Circumstance

Compelling Personal Circumstance is defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in the AmeriCorps Provisions (FAQ Number: [45 CFR § 2522.230](#)). Final decisions on all compelling personal circumstances are rendered by the appropriate OVCS program officer. Release from service due to compelling personal circumstances allows the service member to be eligible for a prorated Education Award. Because this is not to be taken lightly, OVCS requires the use of the following procedure:

1. The Program Director determines whether a member’s situation meets the general criteria of compelling circumstances as outlined by CNCS. Note that compelling circumstances are narrowly defined.
2. If the Program Director determines that a member issue does meet the criteria, a written request for approval of a prorated Education Award is forwarded to the appropriate OVCS program officer. Requests for prorated awards must be submitted in a timely manner (as soon as the circumstances and the member’s inability to complete the service term have been identified – not at the end of the program year).
3. A request for approval of a prorated Education Award based upon compelling personal circumstance must minimally include:
 - a. Member’s name;
 - b. Number of hours and percentage of time completed;
 - c. Detailed description of the circumstances;

- d. Supporting documentation (i.e., medical notes); and
 - e. Letter from member to the program requesting approval.
4. A response will be provided to the program within 5 working days of receipt of the request. A decision will be rendered or additional information will be requested.
 5. A program does have the right to appeal a decision (within 5 days of the rendered OVCS decision); this appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 days of the original decision.
 6. Failure to utilize this process will result in a finding of non-correctable non-compliance.
 7. Note that OVCS has instituted this requirement for the protection of the program. OVCS monitors all member exits for compelling reason. If this determination is made without OVCS prior approval, and OVCS later determines that the member should NOT be eligible for an adjusted Education Award, OVCS will notify the Corporation and the program will be liable for the amount of the Education Award.

Release for Cause

1. A release for cause encompasses any circumstances other than compelling personal circumstances that warrant an individual's release from completing a term of service. Release for cause may be initiated by the service member - for instance, a member decides to terminate his or her service contract because he or she is seeking traditional employment to support a higher standard of living; or may be initiated by the program – for instance, a member has missed service-related meetings or appointments and not followed protocol for absences. Note that release for cause does not require nor automatically imply misconduct by the member.

Additional information detailing under what circumstances AmeriCorps participants may be released from completing a term of service and the associated consequences can be found in 45 CFR § 2522.230

Section 6 – Program Noncompliance

A. Introduction

A compliant program meets or exceeds its identified performance measures, is on time, spends and documents funds as identified in the budget, and is conducted in a manner consistent with federal and state program requirements. OVCS is committed to supporting programs in their efforts to achieve full compliance, and to do so in an excellent manner. We recognize, however, that programs sometimes fall short. In most instances, corrections can be easily made that return a program to compliance. Although the noncompliance is corrected, it is not erased. The instance of noncompliance remains a part of the program's permanent compliance record.

B. Noncompliance

If a program is determined to be out of compliance with program requirements, OVCS will provide the program with written notification. Notification from the OVCS includes required corrective actions, deadlines, and consequences. Consequences may consist of delay in processing reimbursements, limitations of future grant renewals, and termination of the program. Note also that compliance issues may have an impact on members. (For instance, while waiting for a criminal background check response, members must be 'accompanied' and there must be documentation of accompaniment. Failure to document accompaniment results in members' hours being ineligible for consideration toward their contracted and required number of hours served.) Copies of all notices are maintained in the program's contract file.

C. Noncompliance Notification Process

If a program has not fulfilled a *specific* requirement or request by a communicated deadline (via email or letter), the OCVS will send a "**Notice of Failure to Respond**" to the Program Director via email.

If the request has not been fulfilled within 48 hours of the issuance of the Notice of Failure to Respond, a "**Notice of Non-Compliance**" will be sent via email with copies sent to Program Director's supervisor and the program's fiscal contact. This notice will communicate that reimbursements may be placed on hold until satisfactory compliance as determined by OVCS Program and/or Fiscal staff.

If the request has not been fulfilled within 48 hours of the issuance of the Notice of Non-Compliance, a "**Notice of Intent to Terminate Contract**" may be sent via email and postal mail, with copies sent to Program Director's supervisor and the program's fiscal manager.

Issues of noncompliance will, at the very least, be considered when a program is being considered for funding in subsequent years. OVCS reserves the right to terminate a program based on non-correctable non-compliance.

Note: In the instance of fixed, program-wide deadlines or timeframes that are missed, OVCS will omit the "Notice of Failure to Respond" and the 48 hour response window. (Examples of fixed, program-wide deadlines are submission of a Periodic Expense Report by the 6th working day of the month, and formally enrolling and exiting members within 30 days.) Instead, missed deadline or timeframe becomes an instance of noncompliance.

Section 7 – Program Development and Training

A. Introduction

The Office of Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) is responsible for providing ongoing training support to national service programs within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds are available and can be used to support attendance at sponsored events, training activities, and member/program staff development. OVCS conducts annual training surveys to AmeriCorps State and National programs to assess training needs for the program year. Training and resources are provided to AmeriCorps programs to promote continued program effectiveness and sustainability. The training received is offered through accessing national training providers, local training consultants, and staff.

Programs are required to complete a Training Plan as a precontract requirement. The training plan addresses needed training for program staff and service members.

Some of the ways in which training and technical assistance is provided to AmeriCorps state/national direct programs include:

- Program Director and Program Staff Training Meetings;
- Training sessions and topical workshops (conferences, events and meetings);
- Program Director/staff and Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) Teleconferences;
- Annual Statewide Conference on Volunteerism and Community Service;
- Staff coaching and one-to-one direct technical assistance; and
- Training and resources available at the OVCS website:
<http://www.vaservice.org/go/training/assistance/>.

B. Meetings & Teleconferences

Program Director Meetings – Program Directors are required to attend periodic meetings for orientation (new staff), training, program updates, and CNCS and OVCS updates. Program Directors are encouraged to bring program-related staff to meetings.

Program Director Webinars – Bi-Monthly Webinars are held every other month with Program Directors to discuss issues of importance or concern, receive updates on program activities, assess training needs, provide feedback, and announce upcoming opportunities for development and/or operation changes.

Program Compliance Teleconferences – Programs may receive calls from the OVCS to review concerns and/or recognize progress towards objectives. These calls serve as an opportunity to address program-specific issues. Teleconferences must be documented in the program's contract file and feedback provided in writing.

C. Technical Assistance Funding

Technical Assistance funds are no longer available to State Commissions, and therefore Administrative funds and the 1% program support fee are used for enhancing and sustaining high quality AmeriCorps*State and National service programs. All policies and guidelines are set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service. All proposed activities sponsored by OVCS must be consistent within these guidelines.

Technical Assistance funds are used to the extent allowed by funding provisions and the extent

available.

State level funds are used to:

- Offer training resources to enhance and sustain high-quality, effectively functioning AmeriCorps*State and National service programs;
- Strengthen multiple programs, rather than individual AmeriCorps programs, program staff, and members;
- Support collaborations through training that crosses all of Virginia’s national service programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn & Serve America).

OVCS strongly recommends that programs communicate with each other to plan and carry out member training events either regionally or by topic or type of program. OVCS will work with organizations willing to host events of this sort to assist with communication and organization. Note that OVCS may be able to assist with the costs involved in multi-program training events.

Service member or staff training for a single program is funded from the subgrantee’s budget.

D. Annual Needs Assessment/Evaluation

The annual Training Needs Assessment is conducted by OVCS to assess and evaluate the training needs of Virginia AmeriCorps programs. The responses and feedback are used to guide the implementation of an annual training plan and the allocation of training resources for the program year. Each AmeriCorps subgrantee is expected to conduct evaluations and surveys to assess AmeriCorps members’ in-program training needs and to track progress in member development each year.

E. Training and Technical Assistance Resources

Training and Resources for AmeriCorps *State and National programs and members are available online at the Training, Tools and Resource site found at <http://www.vaservice.org/go/training/>). A variety of workshops, seminars, and program events are listed on the AmeriCorps Training/Event Calendar, Funding/Grants, and Resource Portal. The vaservice.org website has links to the Corporation for National and Community Service Resource Center, national training providers, online resources for program staff and AmeriCorps members, and resources in volunteerism.

In addition, OVCS has developed online trainings, including recorded webinars and PowerPoint presentations, that detail the basic elements for carrying out elements of the Program Design, including conducting proper Criminal History checks, creating Member Recruitment and Retention Plans, and conducting Member and Staff trainings, among others. The trainings can be found at <http://www.vaservice.org/go/national/ameri-corps/support/>, within the Trainings folder.

F. Program Staff Training

AmeriCorps Program Directors and program staff receive training in program effectiveness, sustainability, and resources through various activities and training events. The Office of Volunteerism and Community Service staff provides facilitation, specialized training, and resources for new and returning programs. Training for program staff is required and covers administrative functions, policies, program reporting, training/technical assistance resources, and fiscal accountability. Topical training may also be provided by staff and local or national

training providers. The attendance at these trainings for program staff is required and mandatory. Activities/events that involve training for program staff include: AmeriCorps New/Renewal Program Director/Program, Staff Orientation (bi-annually), AmeriCorps Program Director/Program Staff Training Teleconferences, , Virginia Conference on Volunteering and Service, cross-partner, specialized, or topical training.

G. AmeriCorps Member Training

AmeriCorps members should receive continuous member development and on-site training through their assigned AmeriCorps program. Possible topics for AmeriCorps member training include leadership skills, teambuilding, peer-to-peer interchange, public speaking/outreach, accommodation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, life after/beyond AmeriCorps, diversity, conflict resolution, and emergency preparedness. Attendance at program-sponsored trainings is mandatory for AmeriCorps members. Opportunities for training specific to AmeriCorps members include AmeriCorps state launch activities, and conferences on volunteerism and service, as well as other cross-program, specialized, or topical training.

Section 8 – Sponsored Events

A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) sponsors a number of events to promote citizenship and service across the Commonwealth. Attendance at certain designated Office on Volunteerism and Community Service-sponsored events is mandatory, as determined by the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service.

B. AmeriCorps Launch

The AmeriCorps Launch kicks off the service year in Virginia. In some years, the launch event is hosted by OVCS and held in one or two locations. In other years, each Program may hold its own launch event, and Programs are urged to collaborate. The AmeriCorps Pledge is taken, and training is usually provided. The event is held near the beginning of the program year.

C. Statewide Conference

The Statewide Conference, when held, provides an opportunity for training, networking, and collaboration among the various national service groups, volunteer, and service communities.

D. National Service Days

OVCS requires programs to coordinate at least three service projects for National Service Days. One of the service projects is conducted on 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance; another is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which is the third Monday in January. Even though this is a holiday, the project must occur on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Other Service Days from which programs can choose for their third required project are Day of Remembrance (commemorating September 11), Make a Difference Day (third Saturday in October), and Global Youth Service Day (third weekend in April). Programs are also strongly encouraged to plan events for AmeriCorps Week, Virginia Volunteer Month, National Volunteer Week, and Join Hands Day. In addition to the required service events, programs are encouraged to conduct 'extra' service events in their communities or may support individual member or group service events. These present wonderful opportunities for members to engage with the community, and to recruit volunteers.

E. Governor's Community Service and Volunteerism Awards

The Governor's Awards are used to recognize outstanding volunteer service efforts of companies, organizations, groups, youth, seniors, families, etc. across the Commonwealth. These esteemed annual awards promote civic responsibility, national service, and achievement.

F. State Service Plan Meetings and Events

The State Service Plan identifies the service priorities of the Commonwealth as well as the overarching vision of promoting an ethic of service within the state that includes national service, community service, volunteerism, and service learning at all levels.

The common theme of the State Service Plan is to create regional service networks to share information and explore collaboration leading to the provision of comprehensive and holistic services to people in need.

State Service Plan meetings and events are arranged by OVCS, which is guided by the needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth and the State Service Plan Collaborative Partners. **Section**

9 – Program Changes and CloseOut

A. Program Changes

Within one three-year grant cycle, OVCS expects that a subgrantee will experience change. Staffing changes, financial circumstances change, community circumstances change. OVCS is open to subgrantees making modest adjustments that do not diminish program impact from one year to the next. It is extremely difficult, however, to change a program during the program year. Regardless, any situation that would cause a program director to think about changing his or her organization's AmeriCorps program should be immediately brought to the attention of the OVCS program officer.

Just as the Corporation requires an increasing match amount up to 50% at year 10, OVCS also expects programs that remain in the portfolio for an extended period to mature and grow. Indicators that a program is moving in this direction include, for example: taking on a mentoring role with new programs, a leadership role in the region, or becoming an AmeriCorps intermediary for other organizations; implementation of a formal volunteer recruitment and management program; choosing and meeting more rigorous performance measures; implementation of a formal evaluation process that informs program adjustments; expansion of a geographic or programmatic footprint; adding members, service activities or types of service, and demonstrating greater impact; accelerating match beyond the amounts required by regulation; applying for and receiving competitive funding, or being funded as a fixed amount program or an 'education award only' program; identifying and collaborating with new partners; and routinely identifying and implementing best management practices.

OVCS is actively working with organizations around the Commonwealth that have exhibited interest in coming into the AmeriCorps*State portfolio. In order to bring new programs in, current subgrantees will generally need to either graduate from the portfolio, become less reliant on AmeriCorps funding to provide service, or reinvent themselves in some other way.

B. Program Close Out

If a program contract is ended by the subgrantee or the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS), specific financial information must be gathered and filed. The required time frame to complete the close-out documentation is ninety days from the grant termination date. These requirements are determined by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

OVCS requires programs to maintain records for a period of five years after the date of the program's final AFR.

Upon close-out, OVCS staff will provide all required documentation and instructions. This may include but is not limited to a certification of subgrant close-out and inventory of residual supplies over \$5000 and an equipment inventory with a fair market value over \$5000.

(See Appendix 12 for Program Close-out documents)